



Testimony of Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel (CASCP)

3/1/2012

Human Services Committee

In Opposition to Bill 235

AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL AGENTS FOR THE ELDERLY

I am Dianne Stone, the Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center and the President of the Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel (CASCP), the statewide association of professionals working within Connecticut's 160 senior centers. I represent this Association today. I am also the Municipal Agent in the Town of Newington.

While a little surprised to see this bill raised at this time, we are in agreement with the Aging Services Division of the Department of Social Services that the Municipal Agent statute should be changed. But, we are opposed to the bill as it stands and ask that you take no action on it at this time.

Since the creation of the Older American's Act in 1965, Connecticut's Towns and Cities have served an important role in the lives of older adults. In fact, the legislature established 'Municipal Agents for the Elderly' in 1972 in order to assure that information and referral was available and accessible to older adults where they live. In 1973 the Act authorized funding to local agencies for multi-purpose senior centers and it created Area Agencies on Aging. With changes in technology, funding, population and need, the priorities established through the Older Americans Act and the systems designed to meet the needs of our aging population continue to evolve. In fact, today you are also hearing testimony in support of bill 230, An Act Concerning Community Choices for Long Term Care and Disability Services, which establishes a single point of entry network for long term care information, support and services. The Aging and Disability Resource Center is a federally established concept for the integrated delivery of information and referral services that has been implemented in Connecticut. It makes sense. It does not include municipal services.

In almost every community across the State of Connecticut, a Senior Center is providing meaningful programs and services that promote wellness,

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independence and an enriched quality of life. Almost 100% of them are providing information and referral services. While "Municipal Agent" is a statutory title and not a job description, almost half of Senior Center Directors are the Municipal Agent and many other Centers house or are closely affiliated with the appointed Agent. The 160 Senior Centers, operating autonomously within individual communities, are as diverse as the Towns and Cities they serve. While we are all familiar with individual Senior Centers, there is actually very little collective knowledge about them. There is: no defining legislation; no guiding regulations or minimal standard of operation; no centralized collection of information or best practices and; very little understanding of what we actually do in the community. There is also a large disconnect between municipal services and the rest of the aging services network.

We believe that, as Connecticut faces the challenges of an aging population, quality programs provided at a local level will be increasingly important. We firmly believe that those programs can and should be provided locally; at Senior Centers. We also recognize that we need to transform our Senior Centers so that they remain relevant and effective. We cannot do this without our partners in the aging services network and in our communities.

While the current statute does not reflect what we are doing or should be doing, it does codify a role for municipalities and a relationship with the State and it is really the only document that validates what we do. We would support a change in statute that reflects and supports our role in the aging services network and that establishes minimum standards, service expectations, definitions etc. to provide a framework for future development and to ensure that the services we provide are included in efforts like the establishment of ADRCs. To that end, we have attached a report, Tomorrow's Senior Centers: Starting the Conversation, A Profile of Senior Centers in Connecticut that has formed the basis of ongoing discussions with our partners in the network including the Department of Social Services and Area Agencies on Aging.

Rather than supporting the bill before you today, we ask that you support the work that we have started through this study.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.